# Florida House Of Representatives



Shaniece Cooper, a student at Frank C. Martin K Center, serving as a House Page.

#### **Governmental Contact Information**

City of Florida City (305) 247-8221 City of Homestead (305) 224-4400 Town of Cutler Bay (305) 234-4262 Village of Palmetto Bay (305) 259-1234 Commissioner Katy Sorenson (305) 375-5218 Commissioner Dennis Moss (305) 375-4832 State Senator Larcenia Bullard (305) 668-7344 US Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (305) 225-6866

#### **2010 Election Dates**

Primary: August 24, 2010 | General Election: November 2, 2010

#### 2010 HONORS

Homestead/Florida City MLK Parade Grand Marshal Young Democrats' Outstanding Leadership and Service Award FASA's Next Generation Leader Award

FEA's Friend Of Education Award Honorary City Year Member

# Fiscal Year 2010-2011 Appropriations



Policy Areas	Appropriations All Funds
Health and Human Services	\$28,482.3M
Education	\$22,515.2M
Natural Resources, Transportation, Environme	nt, Growth Mgt\$9,778.6M
General Government	\$4,488.1M
Judicial	\$462.4M
Grand Total	\$70,377.4M

### 2010-2011 Appropriations Highlights for House District 118



Representative Bullard: Protecting Your Interest



## Representative Dwight M. Bullard 118 House District

Dwight.Bullard@myfloridahouse.gov

#### Council/Committees: Membership

- Education Pre K-12 Appropriations Committee
- ♦ Education Pre K-12 Policy Committee -RANKING MEMBER
- ♦ Agriculture & Natural Resources Policy Committee

#### **District Office:**

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#### **Legislative Assistant:**

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#### **Senior District Secretary:**

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# REPRESENTATIVE Buight M. Buight C

# Florida Legislative Update

#### Dear friends and neighbors:

Representing your interests in the Florida House of Representatives continues to be a welcomed challenge and a rewarding privilege. I appreciate your vote of confidence and I enjoy serving House District 118.

As many of you know, while much of the country is recovering from the recession, Florida continues to face many economic hurdles. Therefore, during the 2010 legislative session, my colleagues and I focused much of our attention on economic development and job creation. In addition, we confronted a number of issues important to District 118, including Florida's budget, education, and healthcare of Floridians.

I was pleased to continue to serve as the Ranking Member on the PreK-12 Policy Committee. I also serve on the House PreK-12 Appropriations Committee, and the Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Committee.

I hope you find this legislative update to be a useful source of information on the 2010 session. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the issues, please call my office or send me an email. As always, if there is anything that I can assist you with, please contact my office.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you.

Best Regards,

State Representative Dwight M. Bullard House District 118





believe that improving public education is the first step toward creating high-wage Century economy demands. That's why I had hoped the Legislature would have made greater progress on education reforms and would have invested more in our schools.

I don't think the state budget approved by the Legislature holds education harmless. It increases the average per-student spending by a one dollar and 22 cents. School officials say their expenses, including insurance, retirement and utilities will outstrip that increase. The budget also allows for

liami-Dade School Board Member Dr. Larry Feldman, Principal Dr. Linda Amica-Roberts and Faculty members of Coconut Palm K-8 Academy accept State Farm grant

university tuition hikes of up to 15 percent, just as it cuts scholarship awards under Bright Futures.

I am particularly disappointed by the Legislature's decision to pass Senate Bill 6, a measure that drew widespread attention and criticism from across the state for how it would have altered public school teacher benefits. I voted against and debated against this bill in committee and on the house floor. Thankfully, Governor Crist vetoed this bill, which in my view, would have punished our school teachers and harmed education in our state.

jobs and a quality workforce that the 21st Also this session, Governor Crist signed Senate Bill 4, a bipartisan measure that raises education standards and improves accountability and advances some of the reforms touted this year by me. Senate Bill 4 phases out the high school Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test in math, science and writing, and it introduces end-of-course exams in Algebra 1, Geometry and Biology 1.

> Florida has made great strides in improving education since voters passed the Class Size Reduction, and schools are less crowded. In 2002, the average classroom for PreK-3 was 23, today it is 16. The average classroom size for grades 4-8 was 24, today it is 19; and the average classroom for grades 9 -12 was 24, today it is 22. This November, voters will be asked to revisit the class size goals. I believe that the plan going back to the voters to change the class size amendment risks unraveling the progress and weakening class-size gains.



The people's trust is violated too often through abuse and corruption by elected officials and other public servants. I also believe improvements are needed to ensure that state laws and budgets are written in a democratic manner that is consistent with Florida's government-in-thesunshine traditions.

During the 2010 session, the Legislature considered several important measures to combat public corruption, including a bill to allow for the prosecution of public servants – elected and appointed – who purposefully fail to disclose a financial interest or a future financial benefit.

While there is no magic bullet that guarantees government is honest and accountable, a few steps were taken during the 2010 session to expand the arsenal available to the front line prosecutors and investigators fighting those who breach the public's trust.

But I wish even more had been accomplished to improve the public's access to state government. And more could have been done this session to restore voter confidence, close loopholes in the elections statutes and protect voters' rights. For one, I am disappointed that a bill did not pass to amend the state constitution to require budget documents to be user friendly and easier to understand. A proposed constitutional amendment, which I supported, sought to prevent last-minute backroom budget and legislative deals that avoid public input and scrutiny.

I am also disappointed that the Legislature sent to the governor a bill, which thankfully he vetoed, that would have, in my view, impaired the

public's ability to track the influence of money in elections. Senate Bill 880 was promoted as an attempt to provide greater transparency in how campaign funds are used and to crack down on shadowy special interests looking to influence Florida's elections. Unfortunately, controversial sections of the bill, I believe, would have concentrated an enormous amount of power into the hands of a few legislative leaders.





I was proud this session to support new policies to promote the recovery of our state's economy. For me, job creation for Floridians was job number one.

It was important to me to meet the expectations of Florida's families and businesses who asked the Legislature to encourage new businesses, promote job creation and remove barriers to economic growth.

I supported legislation to keep Floridians working, prevent layoffs, to bring a measure of economic stability. For instance, we passed a bill on the first day of session to hold down a dramatic increase in unemployment tax rates for busi-

lents from the Children's Trust visitina the State

nesses for the next two years. These increases would have resulted in layoffs

The Legislature also passed a \$200 million jobs package (over 3 years) that is designed to make Florida more economically competitive and to encourage companies to invest in our state and hire Floridians.

Throughout the session, I supported various efforts that help Florida consumers, including a reinstatement of Florida's back-to-school sales tax holiday that benefits Florida's families. The tax holiday provides a one-time, three-day sales tax holiday for clothing and other school supplies purchased from August 13-15, 2010.

These dollars belong to Florida's taxpayers who deserve some of it back as they stretch their hard-earned dollars to ensure their children have needed school supplies. Additionally, the tax relief measure will help spur growth in our vital retail economy. This year's back-to-school tax holiday is expanded to include, among other items, pens, pencils, notebooks, notebook paper, rulers, glue, binders, lunch boxes, construction paper, markers and folders.

These are tough economic times, but we must provide for roads and bridges, courtrooms, protect our natural resources, provide for law enforcement and prisons, and fund our schools so that we may soon have a world-class education system for students and educators.



 $\mathbf{T}$ he state budget approved on the final day of the 2010 session includes funding for many important local and statewide projects; but it fails, in my opinion, to meet the needs of Floridians. Therefore, I voted against the \$70.4 billion spending plan, and I have urged Governor Charlie Crist to veto at least portions of the financial package.

The budget makes college more expensive. And I have said that it makes state roads more crowded, doesn't improve health outcomes for all people, and fails to make job creation the top priority.

Granted, it was a huge challenge this year to write a budget. The Legislature began the session facing a \$3 billion shortfall. Thankfully, our state was able to rely upon another \$2.3 billion in federal stimulus money approved last vear by President Obama and Congress along with another \$270 million in assistance that Congress is expected to approve. A new gaming

compact with the Seminole Indian tribe also helps to balance the budget with a projected \$433 million in revenues for the state.

I am saddened that the budget is projected to lead to the loss of potentially thousands of jobs throughout Florida due to the decision to shift \$160 million from the state's transportation trust fund to other spending. I opposed that decision.

The budget also makes cuts to a highly successful program that helps new mothers considered at risk for abusing or neglecting their children. A \$10 million cut to the Healthy Families program amounts to more than a third of its budget. Roughly 3,500 of more than 8,700 families are expected to be dropped from the program.

Healthy Start coalitions, which serve at-risk pregnant women and infants, will see a cut of \$2.6 million. Additionally, contributions to county health departments are cut by \$10.5 million.

In my opinion, the budget doesn't hold education harmless. While it increases the annual per-student funding by \$1.22, school officials say their expenses, including insurance, retirement and utilities will outstrip that increase. In terms of overall school funding, this budget presents the second-worst per student funding level since 2006. What's more, the budget includes whopping new university tuition hikes of up to 15 percent, just as it cuts scholarship awards under the Bright Futures pro-

It's also of serious concern to me that funding for nursing homes and hospitals are cut, including a 7-percent reduction in state payments for the care of indigent pa-

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